DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 376 EA 005 498

AUTHOR	Hickcox, Edward S.
TITLE	Assessment of Senior Officials or How To Get the Goods on the Chief Executive Officer.
PUB DATE	Jun 72
NOTE	8p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Evaluation; *Administrator Selection; *Boards of Education; Chief Administrators; *Measurement; *Superintendents
IDENTIFIERS	*Assessment; Management by Objectives; MBO

ABSTRACT

Assessment of senior officials, according to this report, is designed to improve performance in terms of systems objectives. Assessment is defined as the measurement of the distance between performance desired and performance achieved. The author suggests that in developing an evaluative system the school system should first spend a lot of time, money, and effort in choosing administrators. In addition, he recommends development of a system for a nonthreatening cooperative assessment of administrator performance. The system recommended by the author is essentially a management-by-objectives approach. The author contends that an assessment program should ensure that expectations held for a system's educational program by trustees and administrative officers be congruent. (Page 1 may reproduce poorly.) (JF)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 082376

Assessment of Senior Officials

or

How to Get the Goods on the Chief Executive Officer

by Edward S. Hickcox

June 1972

While I was preparing these remarks, I came to the conclusion that I am a greater fool than I had previously thought. Who in his right mind would suggest to an audience of administrators a plan whereby they might lose their own jobs? My only hope, I guess, is to couch these remarks in such abstract, convoluted, theoretical terms that no one could understand anything. Although such is not my intent, I'll probably be accused of it anyway.

We're talking about assessment today. What do we mean by the term? For this discussion, I take assessment to mean the measurement of the distance between performance desired and performance achieved. Put simply, this means, did you do what you said you were going to do.

My first inclination in thinking about this was to say that since the senior officials are responsible for everything that goes on in the school system we should assess them according to school system criteria. That is we could take certain measures such as student progress on standardized tests, retention rates, teacher turnover and the like as measures of administrative performance. There is a place for this kind of thing as I shall mention in a few minutes, but I am convinced that a fair appraisal of administrative performance must be made on a different basis. Not only are our instruments not precise enough at the present time, but such an approach in my view is contrary to the nature of responsibility. In a rational

EA 005 498

sense, one can only be evaluated on what he has some control over, and, whereas an official may be responsible in a general sense for the whole school program, one could not hold him accountable very well for lack of progress or problems for which he is not expected to take action or which are the result of outside factors such as lack of resources or general social conditions.

What happens when essentially unfair criteria are used for assessment, such as teacher attitudes toward the system, is that global evaluations are made which do not genuinely reflect the achievements or lack of achievements of the system in terms of system objectives.

Having rejected pure rationality as an approach to administrative assessment, I wish not to make four points which I think are important in the development of an evaluation system.

1. Spend a lot of time, money and effort in choosing the proper men (women) in the first place.

The typical pattern for selection of senior officials in Ontario school systems is to place an advertisement in the Globe and Mail, wait for replies, interview some or all of the respondents to the ad, choose the individual who does best in the interview or whose background is best known personally to the interviewers. I suggest that more attention needs to be paid to approaching potential candidates directly, describing the job and qualifications for it, designing appropriate application forms, obtaining references and outside judgments and structuring the visit of the candidate to the system. In short, assessment begins with selection.

2. Develop and adopt a system for non-threatening cooperative assessment of the performance of individuals.

A. In the case of the Chief Executive Officer, I think that the

individual should sit down with the trustees at the beginning of a specified period of time and agree on a series of concrete objectives which the CEO will attempt to achieve. At the end of the specified period, the official and the trustees will look at the objectives, hear reports on achievement, and discuss areas where objectives could not be met. In a sense, this is a process of refining the job description.

What types of items make appropriate objectives? We cannot offer a definitive answer except to say that they should be items over which the CEO would have control, and they should be stated in measurable terms. For example, the CEO might commit himself to planning and initiating an in-service training program which will identify and train potential principals within the system. He would agree at the beginning to be accountable for this and would be directly responsible for it.

Although it is often difficult to meet objectives within a set period of a year, I believe that at least once a year the official and the trustees should sit down in private session for purposes of assessment, for the adoption of new or revised objectives and for agreement on the general job boundaries of the role of Chief Executive Officer.

B. The same procedure could be used for senior officials, except that trustees would not be directly involved. The Chief Executive Officer should agree with each of the senior officials on specific objectives related to the individual's responsibilities. These should be written down. At the end of the specified period, reports would indicate the degree to which the objectives had been met, or, in a sense, the degree to which the agreed on job had been done.

C. The results of these sessions should not be either praise or censure of individuals but a sense of the degree of progress and improvement

in the educational work of the system. Failure to meet an objective, for example, may be the result of factors outside the control of the official involved. On the other hand, identification of these factors permits more realistic objectives to be set.

3. Work on ways of evaluating the total school program and relating this evaluation to administrative performance.

We know we are going to see more and more movement toward the adoption of program budgetting systems and related evaluation mechanisms for the allocation of resources. It seems to me that the administrative team (Chief Executive Officer and Senior Officials) could examine its own performance with the aid of some systems techniques. This is similar to the suggestion in Recommendation Two except that it involves the administrative team as a whole. Here is where performance tests related to educational achievement and to administrative responsibility could be used. Given that objectives have been developed, the administrative team could examine retention rates, turnover, test scores and surveys of student attitudes, teacher attitudes, and public attitudes in relation to its objectives.

4. Provide for changes in the function of personnel (or even personnel changes) related to the assessment process.

A. It seems essential to me that there be a degree of congruence between the performance of the Chief Executive Officer and attitudes of the Board of Education. The function of the assessment methods we have described here is to maximize the cooperative potential between the way the CEO does his job and the expectations held for the educational program by the trustees. If the assessment procedure indicates that such congruence does not or cannot exist, then some action must be taken. It is part of my general model for school board governance that in the case of extreme and continued shortfall

between performance and expectations, it is for the Chief Executive Officer to either change his behavior or move to another position. This is because in our present system it is the trustees who hold the ultimate responsibility.

I say this realizing that in Ontario the official holds some direct responsibility to the Ministry of Education. Although this assures some measure of protection for the CEO, it also creates a serious dilemma both for him and for the trustees. The result has been long tenure in many cases where short tenure would be beneficial both for the officials and for the trustees, and probably for the school program itself.

B. For other senior officials, the same general principle holds, although senior officials are directly responsible to the CEO rather than to the Board. The same dilemma, though, exists related to the Ministry of Education. In general, it seems to me, the behavior of senior officials should be looked at in relation to his performance within the administrative team. If his performance, according to the mechanism suggested earlier, contributes to the achievements of the administrative team as a whole, then the emphasis should be on continued improvement in both an individual sense and a team sense. If the individual as a result of cooperative efforts still cannot function effectively, then a change should be considered, not necessarily in terms of firing, which seems an impossibility except in extreme cases, but in terms of shifting functions and responsibilities.

C. Throughout this discussion, I've tried to emphasize the point that assessment of senior officials is for the purpose of improving performance in terms of system objectives. Even as we reject the idea these days of student failure, so we can reject the idea of administrative failure except in extreme cases. What we suggest instead is the idea of examining what we do with the administrative talent within the system in terms of

achieving maximum effectiveness. A willingness to be honest in self-appraisal and courageous in effecting beneficial changes of function is essential.

REFERENCES

Odiorne, George S. Management By Objectives: A Systems of Managerial Leadership. New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1965. 204 p.

The first handbook to describe in depth the formulation and use of management by objectives as a planning system and tool for management.

Whistler, Thomas L., and Harper, Shirley F., editors. Performance Appraisal: Research and Practice. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962. 593 p.

A collection of articles and excerpts on various aspects of performance evaluation.

Adams, Velma A. "In West Hartford It's the Kids That Count." School Management 15: 19-25; September 1971.

Page 21 of the article describes the West Hartford, Connecticut, plan of evaluating principals, through self-evaluation and management by objectives.

Culbreth, George. "Appraisals That Lead to Better Performance." Supervisory Management 16: 8-10; March 1971.

Points out faults in many performance appraisal programs and offers techniques for conducting appraisal interviews.

Heier, W. D. "Implementing an Appraisal-By-Results Program." Personnel 47: 24-32; November-December 1970.

Describes the appraisal-by-results process (management by objectives). Recommends training programs for middle and top management to implement the process. Advises that active management support at all levels is necessary for successful implementation. Proper development and implementation result in improved morale, more effective supervision, and improved efficiency of employees.

Howsam, Robert B., and Franco, John M. "New Emphasis in Evaluation of Administrators." National Elementary Principal 44: 36-40; April 1965.

Discusses purposes, importance, and results of the evaluation of administrators. Emphasizes subjective and behavioral aspects of evaluation.

McCarty, Donald J. "Evaluating Your Superintendent." School Management 15: 38-39; July 1971.

Discusses difficulties of evaluating a superintendent and reasons for not doing it, and suggests a plan for evaluating a superintendent, based on mutually-established goals for the coming year.

White, B. Frank, and Barnes, Louis B. "Power Networks in the Appraisal Process." Harvard Business Review 49: 101-109; May-June 1971.

Reviews one-way (superior evaluates subordinate) and two-way (superior and subordinate evaluate each other) appraisal processes. Advocates "power-network" concept of evaluation which holds that an individual has more than one boss, i.e., in addition to his immediate supervisor, other set policies and guidelines which directly affect his job performance.